

Menu

**Mass.gov**

Search Mass.gov

SEARCH

[\(1\) > Wild Massachusetts \(/topics/wild-massachusetts\) > Learn about Wildlife \(/learn-about-wildlife\)](#)

Ospreys in Massachusetts

Ospreys are large raptors that live in Massachusetts. Learn what to do if you find an osprey nest.



Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*), also known as fish hawks, are large raptors that live in Massachusetts during the spring and summer months. With a diet comprised primarily of fish, ospreys are most often seen near water and are particularly common near the coast.

To avoid disturbing ospreys, please enjoy watching them from a distance using a spotting scope or binoculars. Observing them build their nests, raising young, and plunging into the water to hunt for fish is an exciting and enjoyable experience for the whole family.



Osprey nests

Ospreys begin building nests in Massachusetts in April, and typically return to the same nest site each year. Osprey nests, also known as eyries, are large structures made of branches and twigs. Because ospreys will continue to add new materials to the nest every year, their nests can grow up to 3–6 feet in diameter!

Ospreys construct their nests in open areas like treetops or cliffs, but they are also known to readily nest on manmade structures like homes, utility poles, cellular towers, boats, docks, or artificial nesting platforms. Ospreys will lay 1–4 eggs that typically hatch in late May or early June. Starting in late-August, ospreys leave Massachusetts and head south for warmer areas from Florida to South America.

Guidance for homeowners

Ospreys and their nests are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Ospreys may construct nests on homes, sheds, outbuildings, docks, or boats. If an osprey nest is in an area of concern and you would like to have it removed or relocated, please review the following information.

Step 1: Determine if there are eggs or chicks present in the nest. You can do this several ways, including using a small mirror attached to a pole that you can raise above the nest, using a drone with a camera, or physically climbing up above the nest and looking into it. Any of these methods can be accomplished by the homeowner, a friend or relative, or a hired contractor, such as a properly licensed Problem Animal Control Agent (PAC Agent) that possesses the knowledge, ability, and equipment to safely perform the task. [Click here for a list of licensed PAC agents.](#) ([/info-details/find-a-problem-animal-control-agent](#))

- **If there are no eggs or chicks present**, no permits are required to remove the nest. The nest can be removed by the homeowner, a friend or relative, or a hired contractor.
- **If there are eggs or chicks present**, proceed to Step 2 below.

Step 2: Follow one of the two options below to remove or relocate the nest.

- **Option 1:** Obtain an individual depredation permit from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to remove the nest. This permitting process takes approximately 45 days. For more information about this option, contact: US Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Bird Permit Office, 300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, MA 01035. Telephone: (413) 253-8643 Fax: (413) 253-8424 Email: permitsR5MB@fws.gov (<mailto:permitsR5MB@fws.gov>)
- **Option 2:** Hire USDA Wildlife Services to remove the nest. This option may provide a faster resolution since the USDA is already permitted to remove active nests; however, there is a fee associated with nest removal. For more information, contact USDA Wildlife Services at (413) 253-2403. Note: Some PAC agents, especially in coastal regions of the state, have experience coordinating with USDA Wildlife Services and they could assist you with this process.

What to do after nest removal or relocation

It is highly likely that osprey will continue trying to build a nest in the same location after the nest is removed if steps are not taken to try and prevent them from doing so. Some options include steep pitched hip and ride caps for chimneys/vents and discouraging returning birds using bird deterrent devices like mylar balloons, whirly birds and other tools (most licensed PAC Agents will be familiar with these methods and may offer them as a service). Another option is to continue to remove any new nests before eggs are laid, and the birds will eventually move onto a different location for nesting.

Under any of the situations above, MassWildlife strongly urges you to consider constructing and installing an osprey nesting platform on your property that the nest could be relocated to. This would allow you to ensure the birds can continue to nest and raise young on your property in a location that is more suitable and will not cause damage or disruption to property. Further, by installing a nesting platform on your property, it will greatly reduce the likelihood that ospreys will ever attempt to build a nest on your home again, as they will almost always opt for the more attractive nesting platform. As a bonus, you will be able to enjoy watching the birds raise their young for years to come right from your own yard! For more information and some suggested plans/designs of osprey nesting platforms, see the following links:

- [Osprey Nest Structure Placement Guidance and Construction Plans from the NJ Division of Fisheries and Wildlife](https://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/ensp/pdf/osprey_platform_planandmaterials.pdf) (https://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/ensp/pdf/osprey_platform_planandmaterials.pdf)
- [Nest Building and Maintenance Resources from the International Osprey Foundation](https://www.ospreys.com/nest-building-maintenance) (https://www.ospreys.com/nest-building-maintenance)

If you find an osprey nest in an unsafe location

When ospreys build nests on utility poles, it can pose a risk to both ospreys and people. Live wires can electrocute the birds and fires can start when nest materials come into contact with wires. Power outages or damage to electrical equipment can also occur. If you see ospreys or other birds nesting on electric utility structures, please first contact the utility company directly. Possible solutions may include trimming nest material, removing nests, or relocating nests to a manmade platform. Utility companies must consult with MassWildlife to identify permits required for nest management activities. For example, Eversource has recently worked with partners including MassWildlife and Mass Audubon to develop a [Cape Cod Osprey Management Plan](https://www.eversource.com/content/docs/default-source/community/eversource-cape-cod-osprey-management-plan.pdf) (https://www.eversource.com/content/docs/default-source/community/eversource-cape-cod-osprey-management-plan.pdf) that supports osprey conservation and addresses issues concerning osprey nests on utility poles and other power company infrastructure.

Contact

MassWildlife

Online

email Mass.Wildlife@mass.gov (mailto:Mass.Wildlife@mass.gov)

websites

[MassWildlife Homepage](#) (/orgs/division-of-fisheries-and-wildlife)

[MassWildlife Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/masswildlife) (http://www.facebook.com/masswildlife)

[MassWildlife Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/mass.wildlife/) (https://www.instagram.com/mass.wildlife/)

Phone

[\(508\) 389-6300](tel:5083896300) (tel:5083896300)

Open M–F, 8 a.m.–4 p.m. (closed noon–12:30 for lunch)

RELATED

[Find a Problem Animal Control agent](#) (/info-details/find-a-problem-animal-control-agent)

[Learn about Wildlife](#) (/learn-about-wildlife)

[Problems with Wildlife](#) (/problems-with-wildlife)



[/](#)

All

[Topics](#) (/topics/massachusetts-topics)

Site

[Policies](#) (/massgov-site-policies)

Public Records

[Requests](#) (/topics/public-records-requests)

© 2024 Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Mass.gov® is a registered service mark of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. [Mass.gov Privacy Policy](#) (/privacypolicy)